

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method of servicing content for delivery to a client device, said  
5 method comprising:  
    identifying a type of service to be performed on an item of content,  
    wherein said item of content is identified during a session involving said client  
    device;  
    selecting a provider from a plurality of providers capable of performing  
10 said service; and  
    providing information for transferring said session to said provider,  
    wherein said provider performs said service on said item of content.
2. The method of Claim 1 wherein said selecting comprises:  
15 maintaining a record of providers to which sessions have been  
transferred; and  
    selecting said provider according to said record.
3. The method of Claim 2 further comprising:  
20 estimating an amount of time said session is expected to remain with  
said provider, wherein said record is updated once said amount of time has  
passed.
4. The method of Claim 2 further comprising:  
25 receiving an indication from said provider that said service is  
completed, wherein said record is updated in response to said indication.
5. The method of Claim 1 wherein said provider is selected  
according to a round-robin scheme.  
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6. The method of Claim 1 wherein said provider is selected at  
random.
7. The method of Claim 1 wherein said transferring comprises:  
35 sending information for locating said provider to said client device,  
wherein said client device and said provider transparently establish  
communication.

8. The method of Claim 1 further comprising:  
identifying a source of said item of content, wherein data for said item of content are streamed from said source to said provider and wherein service result data are streamed from said provider to said client device.

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9. A method of servicing content for streaming to a client device, said method comprising:

identifying a type of service to be performed on an item of content, wherein said item of content is identified during a session involving said client device;

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selecting a provider from a plurality of providers capable of performing said service; and

providing information for transferring said session to said provider, wherein data for said item of content are streamed from a content source to said provider, wherein said provider performs said service on said item of content and wherein service result data are streamed from said provider to said client device.

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10. The method of Claim 9 wherein said selecting comprises:  
maintaining a record of providers to which sessions have been transferred; and  
selecting said provider according to said record.

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11. The method of Claim 9 wherein said provider is selected according to a round-robin scheme.

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12. The method of Claim 9 wherein said provider is selected at random.

13. A system for providing content to a client device, said system comprising:

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a service manager for receiving a request for an item of content from a portal, wherein said portal received said request from said client device, said service manager also for selecting a provider from a plurality of providers, each provider capable of performing a service on said item of content, wherein a session with said client device is redirected from said portal to said provider such that said session continues via said provider, and wherein said provider performs said service on said item of content and forwards service result content to said client device.

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14. The system of Claim 13 wherein said service manager maintains a history of providers engaged in sessions, wherein said provider is selected according to said history.

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15. The system of Claim 13 wherein said service manager identifies an amount of time said session is estimated to remain with said provider, wherein said history is updated in response to said amount of time transpiring.

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16. The system of Claim 13 wherein said service manager receives an indication that said service has been performed, wherein said history is updated in response.

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17. The system of Claim 13 wherein said provider is selected according to a round-robin scheme.

18. The system of Claim 13 wherein said provider is selected at random.

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19. The system of Claim 13 wherein said service manager sends information identifying said provider to said client device via said portal.

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20. The system of Claim 13 wherein said service manager sends information identifying said provider directly to said client device, bypassing said portal.

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21. The system of Claim 13 wherein a source of said item of content is identified according to information provided in said request from said client device.

22. The system of Claim 13 wherein a source of said item of content is identified by one of said portal, said service manager and said provider.

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23. The system of Claim 13 wherein said item of content is streamed from a content source to said provider.

24. The system of Claim 13 wherein said type of service is identified according to information provided in said request received from said client device.

25. The system of Claim 13 wherein said type of service is identified by one of said portal and said service manager.

5           26. The system of Claim 13 wherein said service is continuously available from said provider.

10           27. The system of Claim 13 wherein said service is started up and executed in response to said client device establishing communication with said provider.

28. The system of Claim 13 wherein said service manager directs said provider to start up said service upon selection of said provider.

15           29. A system for streaming content to a client device, said system comprising:  
a service manager for receiving a request for an item of content from a portal, wherein said portal received said request from said client device, said service manager also for selecting a provider from a plurality of providers,  
20 each provider capable of performing a service on said item of content, wherein a session with said client device is redirected from said portal to said provider such that said session continues via said provider, wherein data for said item of content are streamed from a content source to said provider, and wherein said provider performs said service on said item of content and  
25 streams service result content to said client device.

30           30. The system of Claim 29 wherein said service manager maintains a history of providers engaged in sessions, wherein said provider is selected according to said history.

31. The system of Claim 29 wherein said service manager identifies an amount of time said session is estimated to remain with said provider, wherein said history is updated in response to said amount of time transpiring.

35           32. The system of Claim 29 wherein said service manager receives an indication that said service has been performed, wherein said history is updated in response.

33. A computer-usable medium having computer-readable program code embodied therein for causing a computer system to perform a method for servicing content for delivery to a client device, said method comprising:

5 identifying a type of service to be performed on an item of content, wherein said item of content is identified during a session involving said client device;

selecting a provider from a plurality of providers capable of performing said service; and

10 providing information for transferring said session to said provider, wherein said provider performs said service on said item of content.

34. The computer-usable medium of Claim 33 wherein said computer-readable program code embodied therein causes said computer system to perform said method further comprising:

15 maintaining a record of providers to which sessions have been transferred; and

selecting said provider according to said record.

35. The computer-usable medium of Claim 33 wherein said computer-readable program code embodied therein causes said computer system to perform said method further comprising:

25 estimating an amount of time said session is expected to remain with said provider, wherein said record is updated once said amount of time has passed.

36. The computer-usable medium of Claim 33 wherein said computer-readable program code embodied therein causes said computer system to perform said method further comprising:

30 receiving an indication from said provider that said service is completed, wherein said record is updated in response to said indication.

37. The computer-usable medium of Claim 32 wherein said computer-readable program code embodied therein causes said computer system to perform said method further comprising:

35 identifying a source of said item of content, wherein data for said item of content are streamed from said source to said provider and wherein service result data are streamed from said provider to said client device.

38. A computer-usable medium having computer-readable program code embodied therein for causing a computer system to perform a method for servicing content for streaming to a client device, said method comprising:

5 identifying a type of service to be performed on an item of content, wherein said item of content is identified during a session involving said client device;

selecting a provider from a plurality of providers capable of performing said service; and

10 providing information for transferring said session to said provider, wherein data for said item of content are streamed from a content source to said provider, wherein said provider performs said service on said item of content and wherein service result data are streamed from said provider to said client device.

15 39. The computer-usable medium of Claim 38 wherein said computer-readable program code embodied therein causes said computer system to perform said method further comprising:

maintaining a record of providers to which sessions have been transferred; and

20 selecting said provider according to said record.

40. The computer-usable medium of Claim 38 wherein said computer-readable program code embodied therein causes said computer system to perform said method further comprising:

25 estimating an amount of time said session is expected to remain with said provider, wherein said record is updated once said amount of time has passed.

30 41. The computer-usable medium of Claim 38 wherein said computer-readable program code embodied therein causes said computer system to perform said method further comprising:

receiving an indication from said provider that said service is completed, wherein said record is updated in response to said indication.